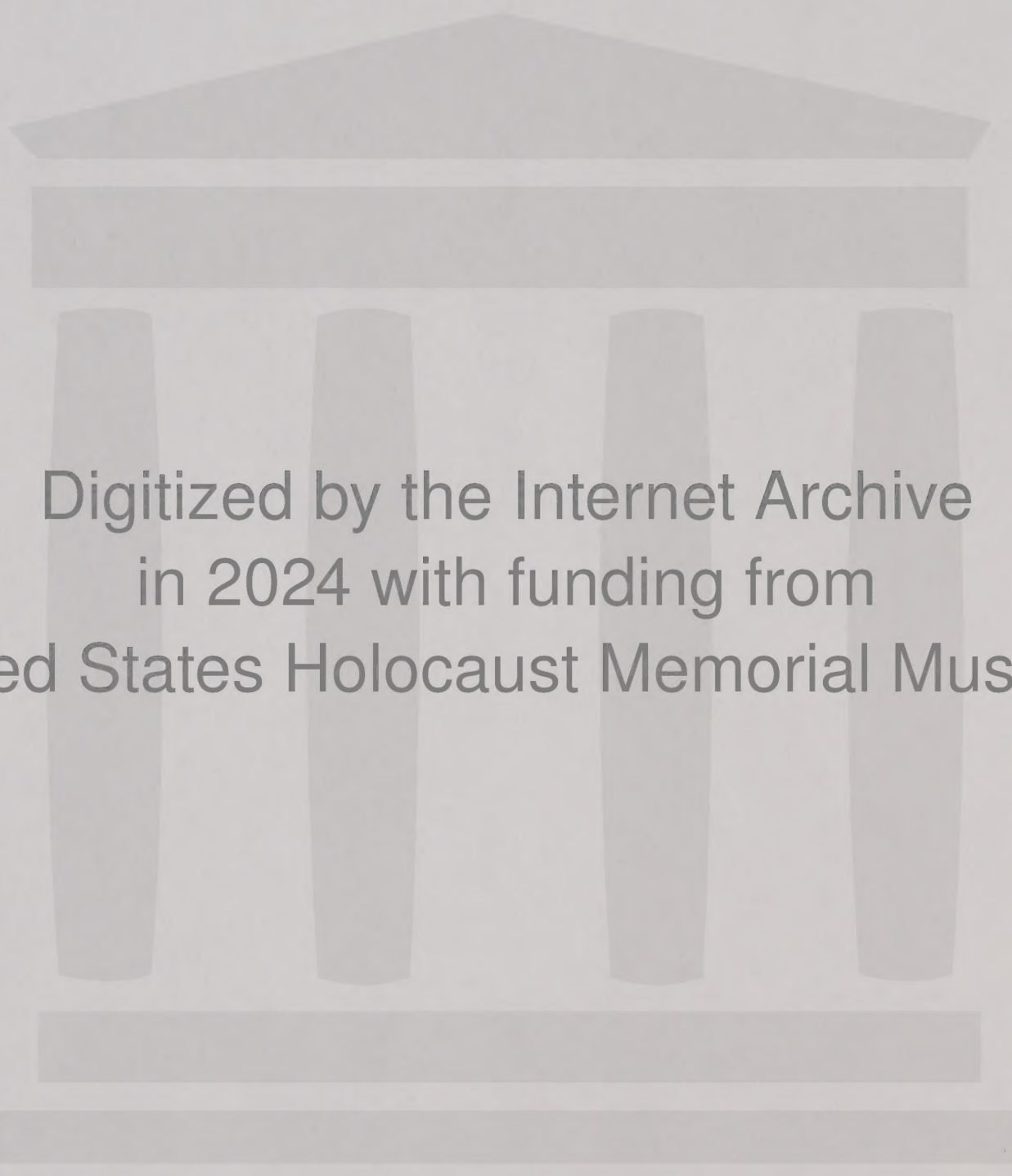




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GEORGE WAS MY BEST MAN, 1951

by Sol Wieder

The final rehearsal for our wedding was about to take place. Edna Rosen, the bride's friend of long standing was selected to be the "Maid of Honor" Edna had no problem with her assignment. In fact, she considered it an honor that she was selected by the bride.

The big problem was to find a friend who will be good enough to volunteer to be my "Best Man." After all, every groom should have one....

Not so fast.... I said.

Yes, I do have several friends from the "old country" - all holocaust survivors, but none would volunteer to be my best man. In fact, when I approached some, they thought that the whole idea was a big joke. ~~Who~~ ~~ever~~ Who ever heard of a "best man?" Certainly no one from where I come from.... Our parents got married and lived happily ever after without a "best man".

You can do without it too, they said... The "best man" idea was nothing more and nothing less than an American "schtick" to make you waste your hard earned money on tuxedos, a shirt to match and fancy bow tie... Besides, who needs such honors? Obviously, not the friends that I grew up with in a small village in the Carpathian mountains.

One friend almost agreed to be my "best man" with the clear understanding that he will not be forced to wear a tuxedo, a "monkey suit". I will not be caught dead in it, he said...

Most friends from the old country were surprised that I would even consider having an Americanized "fancy" wedding... Poor Shlomo, how fast he forgot the past, some felt... Some even accused me of forgetting or giving up on "old value" Jewish orthodox customs and tradition and a handful were insulted for my having approached them with the outlandish and foolish "best man" idea.

What a headache....

For days I was bombarded by the "bride's side" with the same question?

NU??? Where do we stand?

What's the latest on the "best man" situation? After all Solomon, you are marrying an American girl and not some "Galitzianer greenhorn."

At this point I was ready to give up the whole idea of a modern wedding... Who needed it anyway? A circus I can do without....

After eating some refreshments in my bride's parents home, I sat down near a very tall distinguished looking young man sitting in one of the living room chairs next to me. He wanted to know....

What's the fuss all about?

What's going on here?

Why is there so much frustration and tension in the living room?

Well, everybody feels that I must have a "best man" - and I don't have one... That's the problem in a nutshell...

What problem?

There is no problem...

I'll be your "best man" and the problem will be solved..

Who are you, I asked in amazement...

I am "George Asherman", Bea's husband. I assume you know who Bea is?

Yes, of course I know who Bea is.... She is my bride's first cousin.

To make a long story short: GEORGE was my "best man" and solved my problem, everybody's problem.

After the wedding, George and I joined the "mutual admiration society". We enjoyed each others company, sharing good times for close to forty years. When George died in 1990, I truly lost not only "my best man" but also one of my best friends.

